

The Position Argument

When you write a position argument, you must defend your stance or view on a controversial issue, i.e., an issue with two or more sides. Suppose that you were being asked to decide whether Saint Francis University should adopt an honor code. Because there are at least two sides to this issue—to adopt or to not adopt the honor code—not everyone involved in the issue will share your position. You will need to explain your position, especially to those who might question it.

Common Position Argument Topics

Position argument topics usually center on matters of policy or practice. They often take the form of “should” questions.

- *Should SFU adopt an honor code policy?*
- *Should campus security officials be permitted to carry handguns?*
- *Should SFU faculty and administrators enforce some sort of cell phone policy?*
- *Should public high schools require music, art, and/or theatre appreciation courses?*



Not all “should” questions are suitable for the position argument. Personal issues that have no bearing on others’ lives (ex. “Should I go to the store today?”) or issues that aren’t debatable (ex. “Should murder be considered wrong?”) do not make for very good position argument topics.

Position arguments may range in length from a few hundred words to ten pages or more. Research requirements for position arguments vary as well. For a short position argument, you may include information from only one or two outside sources. For a lengthier argument, you might need to consult dozens of sources. Regardless of how many you use, your sources should be credible and the evidence from them must be accurate, timely, and relevant to your position. (For more information about determining the credibility of sources, review our ***How to Find Reliable Sources*** resource.)

Position Argument Components

A well-developed position argument should include the following:

1. **Introduction:** Orient readers to the issue at hand. As you close your introduction, state your position and the points you will use to support your position.
2. **Body Paragraphs:** Each body paragraph should present (1) one point or reason supporting your position and (2) evidence to explain or illustrate this point or reason. Any evidence you use from outside sources should be documented according to your instructor’s specifications.

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3. Counterarguments and Concessions: Even though your position may be compelling and reasonable, you will still have some readers who object to it or whose views on the issue differ from your own. You will need to acknowledge their objections or concerns, and if possible, refute them.
4. Conclusion: While you should not merely summarize your points, you should reiterate them in your conclusion and demonstrate why your position is both logical and feasible.

Related Link

For more information about the position argument, consult Purdue OWL's "Introductions, Body Paragraphs, and Conclusions for an Argument Paper" at <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/724/1/>